



FACT SHEET #3 **BLM, EPA &** **ENVIRONMENTAL** **QUALITY MANAGEMENT** **INC. REMOVE CYANIDE** **CONTAMINATED SOILS** **AT THE** **VETA GRANDE MINE SITE**



Figure 1. General Area Map

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Carson City Field Office (CCFO), in cooperation with the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Emergency Response Office, San Francisco, CA, completed another milestone in continuing efforts to cleanup the abandoned Veta Grande mine site. The Veta Grande mine/mill site is located approximately 10 miles southeast of the town of Gardnerville, Nevada, and 0.23 miles east of U.S. Highway 395.

Site History

The Veta Grande mine is located on approximately 90 acres of public land in Douglas County. Mining activity was sporadic from 1860 until the 1980s, when the Veta Grande Mining Company renewed operations, then abandoned the site.

BLM Actions to Date

◆ In 1992, the BLM initiated a Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation of the Veta Grande mine/mill site. Soil and water samples were collected and revealed cyanide and heavy metal contamination in the cyanide pit and mill tailings.

◆ From 1992 to 1999, the BLM collected quarterly water well samples, testing for cyanide. The studies indicate that cyanide levels are increasing in at least one domestic water well. These levels, however, still do not exceed federal or state drinking water standards.

◆ In 2000, the BLM expanded both the number of water sample locations (up to 14) and began testing for a wide array of elements, metals and salts.

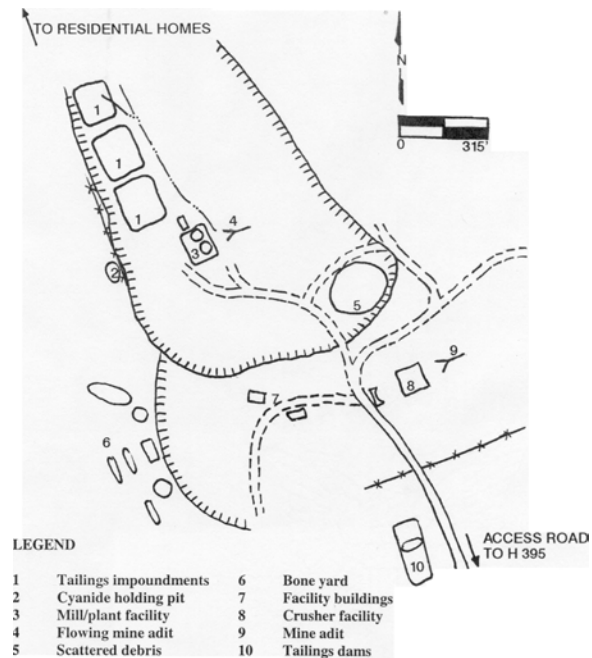


Figure 2. Veta Grande mine site map

◆ In October of 2001, BLM began providing drinking water to four households.

◆ In October of 2001, BLM contracted with Philip Services to cleanup trash, junk, scrap metals, abandoned mining equipment and to

excavate an empty underground storage tank. Over 700 cubic yards of debris were delivered to a local metal recycling firm or properly disposed of in a landfill. The empty underground storage tank was removed (Figure 3) and a soil sample was collected from below the tank. Analytical results show hydrocarbon levels were below Nevada Division of Environmental Protection action levels.



Figure 3. Underground storage tank at the Veta Grande mine site. As of 10-15-2001, this tank has been removed from the site.

◆ On December 10, 2001, Environmental Quality Management Inc., of Lynnwood, WA., began earth-moving operations at the cyanide pit. Contaminated soils were removed from the cyanide pit and transported to an interim storage facility on-site, encased in thick, impervious plastic. The cyanide pit area was excavated down to the bedrock, partially backfilled with fill dirt obtained on-site, covered with an impervious plastic liner and an additional layer of fill dirt which has been contoured and seeded with native species. Cyanide pit reclamation was completed on Sunday, December 23, 2001.

Next Steps

The BLM is looking at addressing the following needs as part of the Comprehensive

Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) process:

- Develop long-term storage or treatment options to break down the remaining cyanide now encapsulated on site
- Implementing a hydrologic study to better define the migration routes for cyanide and/or other pollutants through rock fractures
- Identify options, if any, to eliminate cyanide in groundwater within rock fractures
- Backfill the flowing mine adit, which is dangerous, and divert the water flow around the tailing dams which should increase dam stability
- Develop plans to further stabilize two tailings dams and reduce the risk of failure
- Sampling tailings for cyanide and heavy metals
- Developing plans to seal tailings on all sides, if necessary
- Identifying other reclamation options such as run-off and run-on controls.

Community Involvement

The Carson City BLM office would like to keep you informed about planned or ongoing activities at the site and to give you the opportunity to provide input into the decision-making process. The BLM will be developing a Community Relations Plan, which will seek to identify community concerns and information needs regarding the BLM's ongoing cleanup activities at the mine site.

For more information, or to be included in future mailings, contact:

Neal Brecheisen, Geologist
Bureau of Land Management
5665 Morgan Mill Road
Carson City, NV 89702
(775) 885-6000

Veta Grande Mine Site Fall, 2001

Before cleanup: Cement mixer, circa 1953



After cleanup:



Cyanide pit cleanup in progress, scraping to bedrock.



Cyanide pit cleanup in progress, laying out the liner.



Cyanide pit cleanup in progress.



Cyanide pit cleanup is complete. Pit has been covered with a liner, which was buried under fill dirt, then seeded.

